

VZCZCXRO1960
RR RUEHROV
DE RUEHKM #0602/01 1211226
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 301226Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY KAMPALA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0279
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KAMPALA 000602

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR PM/WRA STEPHANIE PICO

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [UG](#)
SUBJECT: GOU WELCOMES GREATER USG ENGAGEMENT ON SMALL ARMS

¶1. (U) Summary: Illicit small arms/light weapons (SA/LW) proliferation in Uganda stems from numerous post-independence conflicts, regional arms trafficking, leakage from state-owned stockpiles, and to a lesser degree from illicit manufacturing. In response, the GOU, with UNDP and donor assistance, established the National Focal Point on SA/LW (NFP) in 2001 and released an ambitious five-year National Action Plan on SA/LW (NAP) in 2005. To date, the GOU has carried out numerous arms and munitions destructions, workshops and awareness campaigns, and drafted a national firearms policy and corresponding proposed amendments to existing laws. A number of NAP targets were not met due to resource constraints, inadequate training and issue awareness, and lack of high-level political engagement across GOU agencies. Greater USG support for SA/LW control and disarmament could help the GOU better meet NAP targets through support for conventional weapons destruction, stockpile management, border control, and cross-border anti-trafficking initiatives. End Summary.

Background: National Focal Point Has A Plan

¶2. (U) The GOU established the National Focal Point (NFP) on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2001 to coordinate activities to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit possession and trade in SA/LW. The NFP is under the authority of Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda and is headed by Samuel Ruvuma. (Note: Former coordinator Richard Nabudere departed in early 2008 to work for the non-governmental organization SaferWorld. End Note.) Nabudere reported in 2007 that the source of SA/LW proliferation in Uganda derived from four areas: (1) weapons distributed, abandoned, or cached during the country's post-independence conflicts; (2) arms trafficked from neighboring countries (Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia and Ethiopia thru Kenya); (3) leakage from state-owned armories mainly in conflict afflicted areas; and (4) illicit manufacturing.

¶3. (U) The NFP, with the help of SaferAfrica and SaferWorld, drafted and launched the GOU's 2004-2009 National Action Plan on Small Arms and Light Weapons (NAP) in September 2005. The five-year plan sought to provide a framework of activities to address SA/LW proliferation. The plan contains the following ten focus areas:

--National Bodies and Agencies: Ensure that the national and regional agencies responsible for implementation of the NAP are set up and have the necessary resources, authority, and skills to ensure that the NAP is effectively implemented. Establish Regional Task Forces (RTFs).

--Policy Legislation: Formulate a national policy on firearms, ammunition, and explosives. Revise existing legislation, regulations, and administrative procedures on small arms control in line with the new policy. Ensure effective implementation of passed legislation, including training.

--Stockpile Management: Develop and implement an organizational

structure, regulations, and procedures for the Central Firearms Registry (CFR). Conduct national stocktaking operation of all SA/LW, including civilian and state-owned firearms, on the national register to establish database. Identify, collect, pool, administer, and destroy all surplus, seized, captured, and voluntarily surrendered stock.

--Public Education: Develop and implement a national awareness and education program to curb proliferation, reduce demand, and promote responsible management of SA/LW.

--International and Regional Cooperation: Develop and implement required policy, regulation, and administrative procedures to facilitate information exchange nationally, sub-regionally, and internationally. Undertake joint planning and operations with neighboring countries to reduce arms trafficking, demand for arms, and criminal activities in border areas.

--Border Control and Refugees: Expand and utilize computerized movement control systems, including search and detection equipment at all ports of entry. Develop a refugee management policy, create interagency coordination mechanisms to share information, enhance responses to refugee crises and assist with the management of human security in and around refugee camps and the reduction of arms availability.

--Human Development Planning: Develop and implement programs to address demand for arms in affected communities, to include cattle rustling, urban crime, and other socioeconomic push factors, especially along parts of the Kenya-Uganda and Uganda-DRC borders. Strengthen police-community relations and develop and implement community-based policing. Tie NAP to pre-existing development and SA/LW programs and projects (i.e. the Peace Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda and the Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and

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Development Program).

--Training and Capacity Building: Develop and implement comprehensive training programs to establish capacity for implementation of international and regional agreements, declarations, protocols, and the NAP. Train RTFs and civil society.

--Research: Develop and fund action orientated research programs. Assess law enforcement environment in affected areas.

--Critical Areas of Support: Identify critical areas where law enforcement agencies need support to address SA/LW proliferation. Greater staff, technical equipment, and improved facilities were noteworthy requirements.

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NAP Implementation Slow; Political Will Growing
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14. (SBU) NFP Advocacy Officer Joe Burua told PolOff that the NFP had been slow in implementing its plan and admitted that many of the goals would likely be carried over to the follow-on plan. Burua said that a lack of understanding of the nature of the issue and how to meet international obligations, limited resources, and NFP capacity hindered NAP implementation. He reported that final revisions were being made to the National Firearms Policy and the corresponding amendments to the 1970 National Firearms Act that would give the NFP the legal mandate necessary to be more effective moving forward. Internal Affairs Minister Ruhakana Rugunda was very interested in moving this issue forward, Burua noted. He thought that the amendments could be considered by Parliament as early as June 2008. Other NFP successes include establishment of the Regional Task Forces in each of Uganda's police administration regions, a number of workshops with military officials, police, and other actors, and public awareness campaigns.

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UNDP And Donors Supportive of GOU SA/LW Efforts
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15. (U) UNDP Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR) Unit Program Specialist Jose Manzano told PolOff that the UNDP provided support for technical and coordination capacity and policy formulation through the NFP office; the national civilian weapons registration regime and comprehensive MIS system of firearms in Uganda; stockpile management and destruction of surplus arms and ammunition; advocacy and awareness raising on SA/LW; and cross-border dialogue. The UNDP funded a month-long destruction in October-November 2007 of over 460 tons of decommissioned, unserviceable, obsolete and seized ammunition and explosives, which culminated in a public awareness ceremony to highlight efforts. Prior to that, UNDP supported the July 2007 destruction of over 34,000 small arms ammunition recovered by Police in Mpigi District and the destruction by smelting of 57,000 SA/LW in 2006.

16. (SBU) Manzano agreed that the NFP had been slow in implementing the NAP, and suggested that the quality and motivation of the NFP staff hindered more aggressive action. He said that UNDP-CPR originally funded three positions in the NFP, but that two officials departed out of frustration over the lack of NAP progress. The third, Advocacy Officer Joe Burua, remained. He called the departure of former NFP Coordinator Richard Nabudere a "real setback." Manzano noted, however, that some progress had been made and that the development of the National Firearms Policy and corresponding amendments to the Firearms Act would help move the NAP forward.

17. (U) Dutch First Secretary and Legal Sector Advisor Esther Loeffen confirmed to PolOff that the Netherlands Government will provide 500,000 euros per fiscal year to support the NFP's implementation of the NAP. The Dutch funds would also support weapons collection programs in northern Uganda, Karamoja, and Kampala. Loeffen, who is the chair of the Justice Law and Order Sector Donor Coordination Group, will hold a meeting on May 13 to discuss donor support for the NFP and NAP implementation.

Comment

18. (SBU) The GOU, despite the many issues that hinder implementation of the NAP, considers SA/LW proliferation a threat to national and regional security, and is particularly concerned that arms will continue to fall into the hands of insurgents or criminals active in the East African region. Local weapons buy-back initiatives such as the program initiated by Gulu Resident District Commissioner Walter Ochora, although continued funding is lacking, are also examples of GOU commitment. USG engagement and leadership in the area of weapons destruction, stockpile management, border control and detection, and regional anti-trafficking would be

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welcomed by the GOU, and support the Mission's primary goal in Uganda of supporting regional peace and security. The U.S. maintains a strong relationship with the Ugandan military and may be well positioned to engage on sensitive stockpile management issues such as Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS).
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